

COUNTERFORCE DEADLOCK: ARE ARMS CONTROL AGREEMENTS
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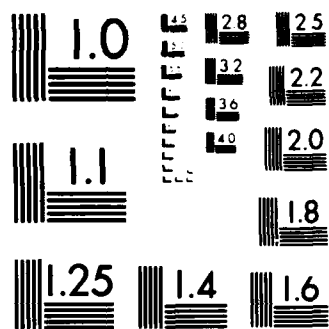
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STUDY PROJECT

COUNTERFORCE DEADLOCK; ARE ARMS CONTROL AGREEMENTS STILL POSSIBLE?

BY

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

COUNTERFORCE DEADLOCK:

Are Arms Control Agreements Still Possible?

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ABSTRACT

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Prologue: Moscow Supreme Military Headquarters, August 1991

Tension is excruciating in the Soviet national military command center outside Moscow on August 20, 1991. Since the Polish uprising and Warsaw Pact invasion of Poland four days ago, fighting has been heavy. The full mobilization of Soviet forces yesterday has provoked a full-alert status of NATO forces and President Reagan's call-up of one million reservists. General Ogarkov, surveying electronic status boards from his elevated desk in the middle of the Soviet General Staff war room, is deeply concerned. Six of the eight circling Soviet reconnaissance satellites have gone "dead," for reasons unknown, but suspected by Soviet scientists to have been taken out by US lasers or STEALTHed anti-satellite missiles. The Soviet Air Defense Command can no longer detect launch of US ICBMs from the silos, but must rely on radar detection in upper ballistic orbits, a loss of 10 of the normal 30 minutes of attack warning.

The US space shuttle has maneuvered itself to pass over Moscow in a fixed orbit. One of the remaining Soviet satellites has revealed that US theater and tactical nuclear warheads have been removed from central European depots and placed in firing units. This is now being confirmed by agents in Western Europe.

The depressed-trajectory Pershing IIs, with their nine-minute time of flight, and extreme accuracy, are the immediate concern of General Ogarkov. Once they are launched, he must respond immediately while his key headquarters and communications links to their strategic forces are still intact. He has had this authority from the Politburo since 1984, when it became clear that political authorities could not conceivably be

consulted in time before Ogarkov's headquarters and nuclear forces in Western Russia would be destroyed. If the Pershing IIs, and to a lesser extent the hundreds of nuclear-tipped cruise missiles deployed in Western Europe are his most urgent threat, the most awesome concern, and the one whose status board absorbs his greatest attention, has been the dwindling list of Soviet ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) still in communication with Soviet naval headquarters. These submarines had been considered a reasonably invulnerable retaliatory deterrent in the Soviet arsenal--unlike fixed, land-based ICBMs, which are easily targetable. In the past 12 hours, 28 of the deployed 32 SSBNs have failed to make radio contact on time, and, although many of their reporting frequencies were being jammed, and some might not be able to surface because they were attempting to evade USN anti-submarine forces, he must allow that some or all could be victims of the American nuclear submarines (SSNs) and their sophisticated ocean surveillance systems. The last four Soviet SSBNs to leave Murmansk and Petropavlovsk submarine bases never even made initial at-sea radio checks. Of those still in port, only the Typhoon and Delta-classes could still reach American targets without getting underway, and these were frightfully vulnerable in port to American SLBM strikes which might offer virtually no warning of impending attack.

Looking up at the central "Indications and Warning" status board, General Ogarkov noted that 13 of the predictable 18 indicators of an American first-strike attack had been met. Four of the remaining indicators he could no longer monitor for various reasons. Chain-smoking his seventieth cigarette of the

day, he reminded himself for the umpteenth time that so far the American actions, apart from the anomaly of overdue submarine radio traffic, conformed to what was known of their highest defense condition (DEFCON ONE). Short of an accident on either side, it was still possible no hostile intent yet existed on the part of the Americans. It just happened to be fiendishly excruciating that American progress in the arms race was forcing him towards defensive pre-emption. Since Marshal Sokolovskiy's landmark works on strategy 30 years ago, it has been Soviet doctrine to use pre-emption at the point where an imminent threat to Soviet forces requires it as a damage-limiting imperative.

In addition to the silo-busting Pershing IIs, the hundreds of partially STEALTHed cruise missiles in Western Europe could be fired with little chance of timely detection as they zeroed in on terrain-hugging guidance programs, below his air defense radar envelopes. The partially STEALTHed B-1B bombers posed a similar threat. The TRIDENT D-5 missiles, with silo-busting accuracy aided by the NAVSTAR satellite navigation signals, circled him like sharks in the Atlantic, Pacific, Indian, and even Arctic oceans. The MX missiles, never put on mobile launchers, were vulnerable, like the Minuteman missiles, to counterattack, so had real value only if fired in a first strike (what the Americans themselves called "use or lose" weapons). General Ogarkov had to admit to himself that he really had only one defensive option under the circumstances: launch under attack. Once it became clear he was under any kind of attack, he must fire his entire nuclear arsenal before he lost it all to the American counter-

force weapons. Even then, successful American space laser tests 15 months ago had led some Soviet scientists to believe the Americans already possessed the capability of instantaneously destroying in mid-air a good part, if not all, of any Soviet retaliatory strikes. It was regrettable there was not more time to pursue what the American Schlesinger called "limited nuclear options," but the first-strike capabilities of American forces in the late 1980s denied that luxury of the 1970s. There would be no escalation. He must attempt to destroy all he could of the enemy's unexpended forces.

General Ogarkov's reverie was interrupted by a messenger bearing a message from the "hotline" teletype. It was regrettable, the Americans reported, that a computer screw-up had caused launch of high-altitude nuclear bursts in the upper atmosphere, whose radiation probably would interfere with long-range Soviet command-and-control communications reflected off the stratosphere. A glance at the C3 status board confirmed that Ogarkov had lost communications with all of his strategic forces not served by buried telephone cables -- that is, all his mobile units.

forces.

More to the point, information no longer came in from his satellite monitoring NATO nuclear forces. Were the Americans preempting? His checklist was positive, short of midcourse detection of incoming missiles. If he waited for that, it might be too late to get word out to launch his own retaliatory strike.

With a sigh, General Ogarkov gave the messenger a pre-coded signal to all his strategic forces, and slumped back into his

chair.

Introduction

This essay is about arms control negotiations--about their development, their recent collapse, and their proper role in preserving peace and security. It is also admonition to policymakers that arms control, in its various dimensions, is the only process likely to reduce the centrifugal forces pulling away at the fragile structure of peace. We must recognize the proper role of these talks--no more and no less--and proceed on a sounder basis towards promoting the process.

Arms control has become a complex entity with an enormous amount of political baggage. Like a prism, it takes on different colors to different observers, depending on what angle they examine it. It is this lack of common understanding about what arms control is and should be that has caused the process to stumble and finally, in December 1983, fall flat. Whether the process can be restarted again, whether or not it can produce greater peace and stability if it does resume, will depend on our understanding of its true nature.

The stakes are high. When fundamental differences could no longer be broached or finessed in the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) talks in Geneva in November 1983, the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) and Mutual Balanced Force Reduction Talks (MBFR) became impossible, and they collapsed in succession. Although MBFR resumed in the spring of 1984 it remained deadlocked and essentially sterile. A resounding silence had fallen across US-Soviet relations, making it jarringly clear that

these talks had become the primary line of communication between the superpowers. Without an ongoing process of negotiating interests and trust-building in the security arena, there could be no forward momentum in other arenas. Without forward momentum, fear and distrust eat away at the restraints on armed conflict.

The political pressures to maintain forward momentum are enormous. With some 50,000 nuclear warheads in the world, a global thermonuclear war is recognized as threatening the existence of all life on the planet. Reduction of inventories would reduce the absolute character of the next war. The unprecedented ease with which wars can now be waged by all countries, thanks to technology and modern transportation, has brought the Third World to a steady simmer of conflict. Both superpowers now enjoy the means to project force globally, and it seems only a question of time before they will bring the pot to a full boil in a direct confrontation. Once locked in armed struggle, they are likely to be lifted by their own doctrines, and the nature of war itself, towards escalation in countervailing violence.

Were world government feasible or desirable, it might provide a mechanism to ensure security while trimming nuclear inventories. For the foreseeable future, nationalism and ideologies will preclude a supra-national security system.¹ Unilateral partial or complete disarmament, inviting reciprocities, is a high-risk approach that could well be more destabilizing than stabilizing. Arms control talks until recently seemed constrained to pursue a gradualist approach,

reducing excesses from inventories, finding equilibrium at gradually lower levels, and simultaneously working to reduce the points of friction, in the wider political environment, that fuel² appetites for rearmament. There is an emerging belief, however, that a gradualist approach, worked out by bartering reductions, may no longer be feasible due to the complications of verification. A totally balanced final equilibrium, protected from inroads of technological breakout, may be the only remaining practical approach.

This study will examine the impulses that led to opening the SALT talks, the proliferation of technical and political issues, the developing barriers that now prevent progress, and the machinery of decision-making on both sides. With the dynamics of the process laid out, we shall then try to answer the fundamental question "How little is enough?" on the basis of the national strategies and military doctrines of both sides. We shall conclude with tentative recommendations for realistic goals and negotiating strategies.

Arms Control Talks--An Unpromising Record

Since Czar Nicholas II, a not particularly profound statesman, first proposed arms control talks at the Hague in 1899, to counter the awful effects of new weapons (machine guns, dreadnoughts, modern artillery, etc.),³ there has been a sustained belief that wars could be tempered by reducing the size and types of armaments, and that civilized nations could negotiate such reductions. This belief ran very much against history and the nature of war, which, as Clausewitz noted in On

War in 1832, tends towards extremes of violence unless tempered⁴ by limited political objectives. Since wars became events of total national mobilization, from Napoleon's time to our own, major powers fighting one another have tended to push conflicts to the extremes of their powers. The Washington naval treaties, the Kellogg-Briand Pact, and like efforts, eddied but briefly the flood tides of new weapons in this century. The impulse to war has yet to be denied, and well-intentioned restraints inevitably grind away when vital national interests collide. The challenge to negotiating arms reductions in the fourth quarter of the twentieth century is to turn back the destabilizing technological lurches in the nuclear arms race, to strengthen war deterrence, and to make the nuclear option devoid of advantages when vital national interests inevitably do collide.

The SALT Process: Channeling the Arms Race

Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson, the second US SALT delegation leader, warned against "negotiating with yourself" in the face of Soviet intransigence.⁵ This is essentially what has occurred on both sides throughout the talks. Despite the more altruistic colorings of the talks--and posturing has been critical for both sides--neither side seriously approached the talks as the start of a disarmament process, certainly not one aimed at eliminating nuclear weapons, nor even lowering levels to the point where the survivability of both populations would be increased. A degree of wishful thinking did take hold in some quarters, again on both sides, that certain strategic "understandings" had grown out of the talks. On the US side, Gerard Smith, Garthof, Kissinger, and later Gelb, Vance, and Carter, believed that the Soviets had come

to accept the belief that "mutual deterrence" was a community interest, that both sides should do nothing to give either a destabilizing first-strike capability.⁶ The Soviets, not quite correctly, viewed SALT as an acknowledgement that the U.S. had accepted the idea of strategic parity with the Soviet Union. These misperceptions, though similar, were to cause major problems in later negotiations.

As SALT was repeatedly to prove, "understandings" frequently were code words for unilateral interpretations stretched across unbridgeable canyons. The Soviets were prepared to agree that a full nuclear exchange would be suicidal. They were prepared to accept the principle of "equal security," but not the American concept of "strategic equilibrium," which had bad ideological connotations that the correlation of forces, and therefore the tide of dialectic history, had frozen. Moreover, they were not prepared to forego programs that would enable them to fight a war successfully if deterrence failed (such as nuclear shielding of everything from armored personnel carriers to aircraft carriers, and ABM for at least their national command authority to direct a sustained war). They did not give up their efforts at survivability (notably civil defense and dispersal/hardening of key industrial plants), despite US insistence that these measures diluted mutual assured destruction by reducing the "hostage" character of populations and industries. Secretary of Defense McNamara at the 1967 Glassboro summit argued hard to get Kosygin to change his attitude and see that ABM systems were "bad" because they could, if sufficiently developed, protect a country

against retaliation from a first strike. More likely, the Soviet volte facie on the "goodness" of ABM derived from the fact that in 1967 they cut back by one third on planned deployments because of apparently serious problems in developmental tests. As SALT talks progressed, the U.S. ABM tests would generally be successful,⁷ as the Soviet tests would not.

The Soviets themselves have indulged in a lesser degree of wishful rhetoric in SALT. SALT I documents recognized the principle of parity among two superpowers, a tremendous psychological milestone for a country that in a mere 50 years had emerged from a peasant autocracy to a global military superpower second to none. After being faced down by superior American strategic strength in the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, the Soviets had by 1972 reached a position, recognized by their only rival, where they could no longer be blackmailed. This acceptance of their new status carried over into the Helsinki Accords, wherein the US acknowledged in 1975 the postwar status of Eastern Europe, and into SALT II, where the principle of parity was continued. Although these tokenisms of parity seem significant, they are relatively meaningless on the American side. The US positions have never truly accepted a condition of parity with the Soviets, apart from the dimension of quantities of delivery systems. Implicit in every American proposal has been a belief that superior technology would retain a decisive edge to American systems. The US has never accepted overall parity, nor any⁸ agreement that denied the momentum of its technological edge.

Both sides have approached arms limitations talks with diametrically opposed world views of what constitutes acceptable

behavior on the other's part. This was particularly true during the period of detente, 1969-1973. Kissinger attempted to weave a "new relationship," based on an accepted status quo of spheres of influence, and increasing economic interdependence. When Soviet behavior did not veer toward the prescribed "operational code," the whole pattern of linkages became discredited -- perhaps prematurely; it was, after all, a long-term process in Kissinger's schema -- and detente was formally dropped as a policy term by President Ford in 1974. For the Soviets, detente was a maturing phase of "peaceful coexistence" in the nuclear age. They accepted that total war was no longer a necessary or even desirable process in the dialectic advance of history, but this fact did not change the inexorable shifting of the correlation of other forces toward communism, or their duty to assist it where possible. In fact, in military circles, a belief that deterrence (defined as a credibility to win a prospective war, not just to inflict unacceptable damage) only comes from superiority is generally accepted. In Brezhnev's more politic words to the 25th CPSU Congress:

Detente does not in the slightest way abolish, and cannot abolish or change, the laws of the class struggle. We do not conceal the fact that we see detente as a way to create more favorable conditions for peaceful Socialist and Communist construction. This merely confirms that socialism and peace are indivisible.⁹

For a Soviet leader to accept Kissinger's concept of a Metternichian status quo would have meant abnegation of the most fundamental tenets of Marxism-Leninism, and thereby forfeiture
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of all leadership legitimacy.

Real Motives--Real Fears

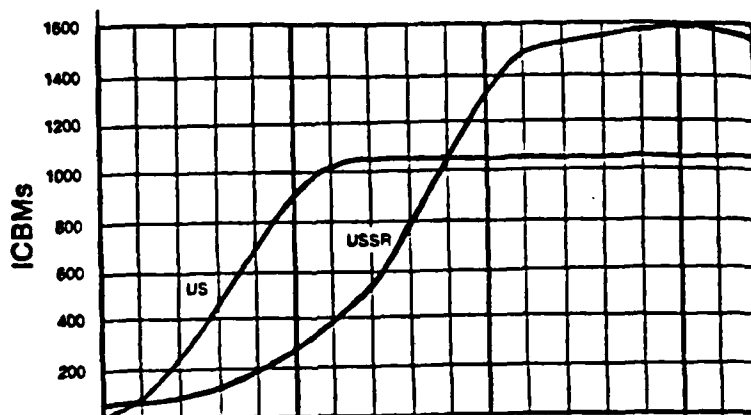
The not inconsiderable achievements of SALT I and II fortunately did not rely on common understandings of each other's motives for the talks. Both sides sought, and got, a degree of stability in the accelerating pace of the arms race. The prime objective of the talks was not to reduce arsenals, or even current defense costs, but to reduce the mind-numbing complexity of options available to the other side, so that one's own side did not go bankrupt trying to counter them all.

McNamara was the original instigator of SALT in 1966. He wanted an ABM treaty to fend off pressure to deploy a system¹¹ so astronomically expensive that funding for the sub-strategic components of his "flexible response" strategy, and the Vietnam war, was in jeopardy. These pressures continued to motivate his successors.

The Soviets were in an even tighter financial crunch. The combined shocks in the early 1960s of the Kennedy Administration's decision to start a crash program to build a thousand ICBMs (when they already had a 10-to-1 advantage) and the strategic blackmail of the 1962 Cuban missile crisis (JFK threatened "strong and overwhelming retaliation" unless an immediate response to his ultimatum to the Soviets were received)¹² created a quite rational concern in the Kremlin that the Americans sought domination if not subjugation through a first strike. After Khrushchev's ouster and a period of internal assessment with a stand pat 1965 defense budget, Brezhnev launched a massive ICBM construction program, and only slightly less ambitious SLBM effort, in 1966. By 1969 the Soviets were

passing the US ICBM launcher level (steady at 1,054 since 1967) and pulling ahead, probably in recognition of the handicap of the lesser accuracy of their missiles, and as a hedge against resumption of reactivated launcher production lines by the US, for which Congressional pressure was increasing. The priority given to ICBMs reflected doctrinal needs as well. Should deterrence fail, the only way to fight a nuclear war is to strike first as fully as possible. With their disadvantage in accuracy, this meant enough missiles for multiple targeting and very large payloads. Doctrinal needs and political needs to avoid being blackmailed again gave ICBM construction a very large boost.

U.S. AND SOVIET ICBM PRODUCTION

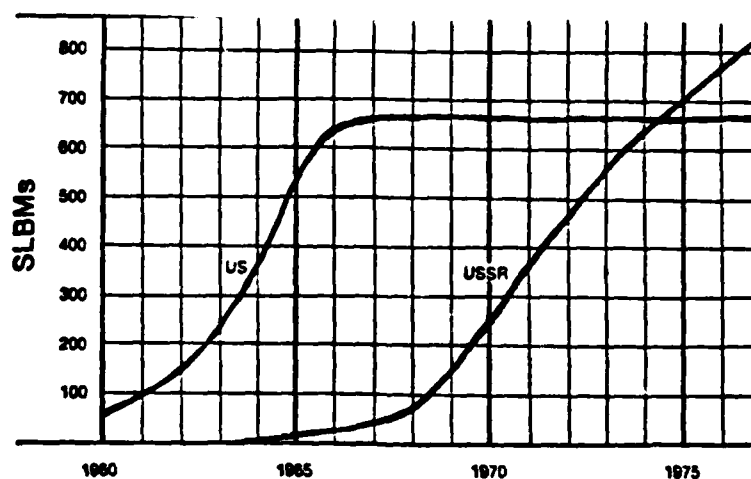


(Graph compiled by Richard Aldridge from DOD and SIPRI sources)

Fig. 1

The introduction of Yankee-class SSBNs in 1969 began a rapid build up to provide a reliable second-strike force, which they did not have in their immobile ICBM force. The SLBMs released ICBMs for the large demands for priority counterforce targets (command and control centers, ICBM fields, military centers, etc., which Sokolovskiy and others considered "must hit" targets in the first exchange), and also provided a quick-shot, little warning capability against SAC airfields. The SLBMs were also recognized as being useful countervalue bargaining leverage in a protracted war.

U.S. AND SOVIET SLBM PRODUCTION



(Graph compiled by Richard Aldridge from DOD and SIPRI sources)

Fig. 2

By 1969 the Soviets had pulled up to approximate parity. Deciding where to direct further efforts required a clearer idea of US intentions, and hence their initiative to include offensive systems with the ABM talks.

The Soviet-American positions in 1969 merit particular attention, because the dynamic forces of that time created a strong desire on both sides to reach agreement that sustained the SALT process until 1979.

The Americans had a barrelful of matured weapons technology; the problem was selecting systems to fund for deployment. The ABM Sentinel system offered major strategic advantages that might even be decisive in follow-on systems if the technology lead widened. MIRV (multiple independent reentry vehicle) warhead technology was emerging from penaid (penetration-aids; i.e., decoys) research. US overhead surveillance systems were providing a real threat for targeting Soviet defenses. US anti-submarine warfare capabilities were beginning to pose a threat to new Soviet ballistic missile submarines (the Soviet's most secure retaliatory force) as super-quiet nuclear submarines, advanced P-3 maritime reconnaissance planes, and SOSUS (sound-surveillance system) were deployed. A modern replacement for the B-52 heavy bomber was well into development. US ICBMs and SLBMs were being modernized with greater accuracy, threatening "hard-kill" capability against Soviet ICBM silos. If all these systems matured and were deployed, the U.S. might again have achieved a first-strike capability by the mid to late 1970s. Not clear what US intentions were behind this developing capability, a consensus emerged in the Soviet hierarchy to begin the SALT process.

Curtailement of the American ABM program was the top priority; even if all the first-strike-quality US offensive systems were deployed, the US would still be vulnerable to, and deterred by, a launch-under-attack Soviet response, provided no ABM defense could neutralize it.

Apart from the strategic aspects of a worsening correlation of forces, the Soviets were clearly concerned about its negative implications affecting their freedom of action globally. It was during this period that the Soviets shifted the weight of their efforts to the Third World and dramatically increased the scope of their actions and involvements.

The American side was less urgently motivated. A 1967 Brookings study had confirmed what McNamara wanted to hear--that it was cheaper to build more offensive missiles to saturate an ABM system than it was to build ABMs. In 1969 Kissinger inherited an essentially static strategic force, 1,054 ICBMs and 581 SLBMs. It was adequate, with European based bombers, to meet the needs of the SIOP (strategic integrated operations plan) for nuclear targetting in a world war. The emerging Soviet superiority in ICBM launchers, however, created near-term intense political pressures and long-term strategic concerns that the imbalance might become severe. Since his 1957 book, Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy, Kissinger had been aware that after a certain sufficiency, more nuclear weapons ceased to offer significant further bargaining power. The West's greatest vulnerability to Soviet power lay in the preponderant Warsaw Pact conventional forces facing NATO in Northern and Central Europe, a

1.54 to one advantage in men, 2.38 to one in tanks, and 1.85 to one in planes.¹⁴ The Vietnam war had drained off equipment from US forces in Europe, and delayed conventional modernization. He was acutely conscious of reduced American credibility within the Alliance, and of Moscow's overtures to Bonn. Think tanks were beginning to generate a debate over counterforce targeting, the so-called limited nuclear and strategic options (LNOs, LSOs), which were attractive, if quantities of Soviet ICBMs didn't become so huge as to make command-and-control unmanageable on both sides.

The Vladivostok Accord: Parity as a Hedge

The American calculus on SALT I was simple. With MIRV technology about to triple the number of warheads per ICBM, and accuracy¹⁵ already giving US delivery systems far greater killing power, there was no inclination to produce more delivery systems just to catch up with the small advantage in numbers of ICBMs and overall throw-weight the Soviets enjoyed. A quantitative "cap" on current production of ICBMs just enhanced the emerging MIRV advantage. Critics of SALT I, especially Senator Henry Jackson (D-Wash.), warned that this calculus would backfire if the Soviets acquired MIRV technology and greater accuracy. DIA and CIA estimates, that this threat was far in the future, turned out to be wrong. Congressional fears that the SALT I throw-weight and launcher advantage would give the Soviet Union the eventual upper hand led to the 1974 Vladivostok Accords, which reestablished essential numerical equivalency in delivery systems and MIRVed forces.

SALT II: Momentum Crumbles Efforts to Define Parity

Historians will enjoy drawing parallels in decades ahead between Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points and Jimmy Carter's SALT II crusade. Both Presidents attempted to create a structure of peace that would cause nations to make a Kierkegaardian "leap of faith" towards mutual trust and conciliation. Both failed to deal with global and domestic realities, and saw their projects collapse.

Carter proceeded from the outset to attempt radical departures from the slow-moving SALT I process. His March 1977 offer to make deep cuts in US and Soviet strategic forces was immediately rebuffed with deep suspicion. His emphasis on cuts in land-based ICBMs, which constituted the bulk of Soviet strategic nuclear forces, appeared to the Soviets to be a deliberate ploy to create strategic advantage. Carter's suspected duplicity was reaffirmed in Kremlin minds as his "human rights" crusade became overtly supportive of Soviet dissidents.¹⁶

Notwithstanding these suspicions, the Soviets were even more interested in SALT II in 1977 than they had been a decade earlier in SALT I. American research and development programs were again spawning a new generation of monsters, and Moscow was more than ready to reduce pressures on Pentagon budgeteers to deploy all of them. The demons this time were neutron bombs, which threatened to undo Moscow's enormous investment in armored forces, the B-1 bomber and cruise missiles, which in proliferation would require a whole new, extraordinarily expensive air defense network, TRIDENT submarines, which, unlike their Polaris predecessors, were accurate enough to target Soviet ICBM silos, and the MX mobile

ICBM, which threatened to increase US strike power with 10 warheads of silo-busting capability, compared to the Minuteman III's 3-warhead MIRVs, and to elude with mobility any retaliatory strike.

Although President Carter was personally keen on the peacemaking aspects of arms reductions, others in Washington had their own concerns about Soviet arms, which they hoped to ameliorate in SALT II. MIRVing of the Soviet ICBMs had begun around 1975 with the new SS-19, the first Soviet ICBM considered accurate enough to destroy US land-based ICBMs. The deploying two-stage IRBM SS-20 could be readily converted with a third stage to become an ICBM, the SS-16, thereby threatening "breakout" into strategic superiority. The 300-plus huge SS-9 and SS-18 heavy ICBMs, the backbone of the Soviet strategic rocket force, still posed an enormous threat, especially as the MIRVed SS-18 began replacing the older, single warhead SS-9 in 1977. A new long-range bomber, the Backfire, became an intercontinental nuclear threat, especially if refueled in flight. Even if not refueled, they could still reach some U.S. targets on a one-way trip, a throw-away option that the U.S. planned on in the early days of its own nuclear bombers.

The extraordinary negotiations which produced a signed SALT II agreement have been well chronicled elsewhere and will not be repeated here. What is of ongoing concern to current INF/START talks is the fact that SALT II could not be ratified and that verification of limits on strategic forces ceased to be credible for an increasing number of people.

Most opposition to SALT II centered on the vulnerability

issue. For the first time, deployment of Soviet weapons systems, the highly accurate SS-19 and the behemoth SS-18, threatened a leg of the US TRIAD. The US land-based Minuteman III missiles were the only quick-reaction counterforce weapons that were accurate enough to provide a silo-busting second-strike capability. B-52s and F-111s were too slow to take out Soviet ICBMs in a rapidly escalating exchange. The Polaris and Poseidon SLBMs were not accurate enough to be silo-busters. Fears of a "window of vulnerability" into the mid-1980s, when TRIDENTs would be deployed, made impossible ratification of a SALT II treaty that allowed this threat. Other issues with lesser impact (exclusion of Backfire limits, ABM compliance vis a vis the SA-5 system, telemetry encryption, the loss of monitoring stations in Iran, etc.) contributed to rejection and an uneasy feeling that Carter was trading away American security after he had killed the B-1 bomber, the neutron bomb, and other projects designed to restore the lost strategic lead, while the Soviets charged ahead at full steam. The public's and Congress' perceptions were that an intoxication with detente had caused Carter to fail to do what was allowed and needed.

The verification issue was more complex and far more threatening in the long run to the SALT/START process. Qualitative improvements in strategic nuclear forces were becoming increasingly hard to verify without disassembling the weapons. The number of MIRVed warheads in a missile, the accuracy and yield of each warhead, the "cold pop-up" reload status of a launcher, the number of cruise missiles in an

airplane, truck, or ship, and the range of those cruise missiles could not be verified absolutely without on-site inspection, a procedure the Soviets have refused since Eisenhower's first offers of arms talks in the 1950s.¹⁸ What could and could not be verified was becoming (and still is) a narrowing percentage of the parameters that make a difference.

As Carter and Vance pushed hard to resolve the final roadblocks in SALT II negotiations, the concept of "strategically significant" violations, beyond the reach of national technical means of verification, emerged. Opponents of compromise on SALT II verification roadblocks were reminded that new weapons systems took years to develop and test, and that, without exception, US intelligence had detected each new system long before deployment. While it is theoretically possible to deploy a new system, or an improved old system (e.g., an SS-9 with MIRV), the reliability of such systems would be gravely suspect without extended operational testing, which was verifiable. No one was likely to attempt a first-strike "breakout" capability with untested weapons, especially in view of the unprecedented headaches now routinely encountered in getting complex new systems to work right.¹⁹

START/INF: No Security Without Superiority?

President Reagan arrived in office with a strong mandate for rearmament. The "window of vulnerability" issue inflamed more fears than palliatives like "strategically significant violations" could assuage. Bold Soviet incursions into Angola, the Horn of Africa, and finally Afghanistan convinced a majority of American voters that, whatever the temporizing Carter

strategists said, the Soviets obviously were no longer intimidated by American power.

Reagan immediately began the largest build-up of strategic and conventional forces since J. F. Kennedy's administration. His appointment of General Rowny to head the START (formerly SALT) talks, Eugene Rostow and later Kenneth Adelman to head the Arms Control Agency (ACDA), and Paul Nitze to head the INF talks, were a message to all that a much tougher stance on arms talks would be made henceforth. Rowny had "mutinied" from the SALT II talks, which he considered a giveaway to the Soviets. Nitze and Rostow had led the attack on the SALT II treaty through the "Committee on the Present Danger" and the Atlantic Council. Adelman, in an unguarded moment, had remarked in 1981, well before his Senate confirmation hearings, that he considered arms talks "a sham. . . My policy would be to do it for political reasons."²⁰

If the negotiating team Reagan fielded seemed tough, the policymakers in Washington were even tougher. Richard Perle, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy, responsible for overseeing the Pentagon's START positions, was so hawkish that he would later accuse Secretary of State Haig of being "insubordinate" to the President and compared Nitze's efforts to break the INF impasse with Neville Chamberlain's²¹ "slide into surrender" at Munich. Richard Burt, head of the State Department's Political-Military Affairs Bureau and later Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, was equally hawkish. As the principal INF policymaker at State, he somewhat churlishly

remarked "The purpose of this whole exercise (INF talks) is maximum political advantage. It's not arms control we're engaged in, it's alliance management." ²² Edwin Meese, Reagan's principal political counselor within the White House, summed up the administration's inclinations in 1981 as the rearmament program swung into gear: arms control would be subject to "benign ²³ neglect."

For the first time, arms talks were not being approached by both sides as a "capping" exercise. The Soviets, having stolen a march in the late 1970s by deploying SS-20s to redress the perceived imbalance of US forward-based systems ("FBS," i.e., European bombers and carrier strike aircraft), and to meet their own doctrinal requirements for theater nuclear warfare, were prepared to negotiate on the foundations of SALT II, with balanced reductions preserving the current parity. This "parity," Defense Secretary Weinberger has noted, was continuously proclaimed by Soviet leaders from 1977 (when there were 140 SS-20s with 520 warheads) to today when there are 230 ²⁴ more SS-20s with 690 more warheads). But, as diplomatic historian Strobe Talbott has observed, Reagan's was "the first US leadership ever to make a negative net assessment of the overall military balance the starting point of its approach to the bargaining table; it was the first to insist on reaching the bottom line of an agreement by a process of American addition and ²⁵ Soviet subtraction."

Reagan's initial offer at the INF talks in November 1981 was the "Zero Option." The US would forego deployment of Pershing II and cruise missiles if the Soviets dismantled all their SS-20s.

Besides pushing a precedent hitherto universally rejected in arms talks--asking the other side to give up an expensive, deployed system--the absolutist character of the proposal meant the Soviets had to step backwards into what they claimed to be an inferior theater position vis a vis the FBS threat. Zero Option from their standpoint was totally non-negotiable.

Zero option reflected very firm Administration beliefs. NATO had recognized, and two U.S. administrations (Carter's and Reagan's) concurred, that the SS-20 and Backfire seriously upset the theater balance of forces. The U.S., in particular, was reluctant to "balance" the INF-FBS issue because of the extreme difficulties in including dual-purpose aircraft in a nuclear negotiation, especially when NATO airpower is probably the only area in which it possessed a potential advantage in a European war. Rowny and Nitze were determined not to repeat what they perceived as a past U.S. error -- starting with an already "reasonable" middle-ground position and letting the Soviets wait us out from an extreme one. They apparently believed, too, that in any less comprehensive proposal, the predictable result of protracted negotiations would be no deployment by NATO. The SS-20's mobility and size, moreover, made a ban more verifiable. If the U.S. were to give up an area of perceived technological advantage, its own margin of security, then the entire SS-4, SS-5, and SS-20 inventory must also go, leaving neither side with a long-range INF missile capability.

The same tough stance virtually put a freeze on START initiatives. Only after political pressures against the MX

missile forced him, 17 months into his administration, did Reagan wind up an extended strategic review and put forth a START proposal to show some flexibility to domestic critics. In May 1982 he proposed the Soviets reduce the number of land-based warheads allowed under SALT II by about 60 percent, with a later²⁶ phased reduction in ballistic missile throw-weight. Since the Soviet strategic arsenal was overwhelmingly concentrated in ICBMs, unlike the US TRIAD, acceptance of such a proposal could only be viewed in the Kremlin as giving up strategic parity, by emasculating the centerpiece of its doctrinal force structure, virtually a unilateral disarmament. The Soviet counter response was to propose balanced reductions based on a SALT II parity. Because Washington no longer viewed SALT II as a benchmark for parity, a year would go by without further significant START initiatives.

1982/83: The Era of Political Hostages

If the Reagan administration truly believed it could put arms talks on "hold" while it re-achieved strategic superiority, it was soon disabused of that belief. Congress and our NATO allies were not prepared to put the Soviets into a military squeeze without a continuing strategic dialogue to keep relations from reaching full rupture.

For West Europeans in NATO, the December 1979 "dual track decision"--to request modern US theater nuclear forces (Pershing II and cruise missiles) while pursuing negotiations to remove the SS-20 threat--was a first-class political hot potato. As months passed and it became clear that INF talks were going nowhere, domestic opposition mounted rapidly. The ensuing debates drove

wedges into the already thin political seams of NATO, which the
Moscow propaganda organs adroitly exploited.

The American missiles had been requested at West German
Chancellor Helmut Schmidt's initiative in 1977 to "recouple"
the central US strategic systems to the defense of Europe. He
and other NATO leaders feared that the Soviet SS-20s had
"decoupled" the deterrent of US ICBMs by making a nuclear war
limited to Europe more likely. The cruise missiles and Pershing
IIs, based in Europe, could reach European Russia, and therefore
ensure that a nuclear war in Europe immediately escalated to both
superpowers, since the Soviet Union would be bound to retaliate
on the US if its own heartland were attacked.

This argument read very differently on the European
grassroots level. Until modernization of INF, the average
European had considered a European war unthinkable, and therefore
fully deterred. It was not necessary to match the Warsaw
Pact's conventional superiority, because the US was committed to
use its ICBMs and SLBMs to destroy those forces if a conventional
war started and went badly, as just about everyone expected it
would. The SS-20s, introduced gradually since 1977, were
unfortunate but not particularly sensitive, since the residents
of Amsterdam, London, and Bonn already considered themselves
under the nuclear gun.

The Pershing IIs and cruise missiles, however, made them
feel naked to the terrors of nuclear war in a frightening new
sense. For the first time, their countries became "must" targets
in any nuclear exchange, since the new American weapons were

capable of striking deep into the Soviet Union. Previous American INF systems were relatively short range, and most warheads were of tactical (less than 160 km) range. The nuclear kill zones could be expected to be relatively confined to the zone of the conventional battlefield, until countervailing counterforce escalation resulted in ICBM exchanges against the superpowers' homeland ICBM fields. Attacks on European cities outside the areas of troop engagements could be expected to be held off for awhile as bargaining hostages, the generally accepted role of counter value targets in Soviet and US declaratory doctrines. If the madness reached that point of escalation, perhaps political accommodation could still be attempted.

The new INF systems utterly destroyed such illusions. Such counterforce weapons were known to be at the top of the Soviet targeting list. More weapons, with more radiation and fallout, would land in their homelands. Worse, these "pin-point" accuracy weapons introduced the possibility that the US might use them preemptively to start a nuclear war limited to Europe but emasculating the Soviet European forces and decapitating their national command authorities. President Reagan's confrontational policies towards the Soviet Union and his "Evil Empire" speeches seemed to echo Cato the Elder's "Carthago delenda est" (Carthage must be destroyed) rhetoric. Europeans on the street were acutely conscious of being hostage to an alliance leader whose restraint was suspect in their eyes.

Although both Margaret Thatcher and Helmut Kohl handily won elections in the heat of this debate, most observers considered

it a close call when the weapons were finally introduced in December 1983. Helmut Schmidt's Social-Democratic Party swung overwhelmingly against him and Prime Minister Lubber's Christian Democratic Party in the Netherlands may not survive over the issue.

The volatility of the "being-targeted" issue was highlighted by France's position. A socialist government strongly supported INF deployment, and the French Communist party, one of the most pro-Moscow parties in Europe, failed to generate any real enthusiasm over the issue. As one political observer of European politics has pointed out, the weapons were not being put on²⁹ French soil. Besides, the French had been more comfortable all along with deterrence enhanced by doctrines of pre-emption and certainty of response in a launch-on-warning or launch-under-attack situation. U.S. INF systems fit that bill perfectly.

European jitters became the focus of Moscow's INF negotiations. As distasteful as retrenchment in SS-20 deployments would be, especially to the Soviet military, it was clear that failure to compromise would inevitably result in deployment of the US systems, and having to live under the threat of a Pershing II missile that they believed could impact downtown³⁰ Moscow in 9-10 minutes. Most observers believe Moscow allowed its chief INF negotiator, Yuli Kvitsinsky, to explore unofficially with Paul Nitze, his US counterpart, a possible compromise in July 1982. The resulting "Walk in the Woods" proposal would have limited the US to 75 ground-launched cruise missiles and the USSR to 75 long-range INF missiles in Europe and

75 LRINF east of the Urals, with no Pershing II deployments. Whether this package would be acceptable in the Kremlin's power centers was never determined. President Reagan refused in September 1982 to drop Pershing II deployments, and Nitze was left without any proposals in which the Soviets were interested.

Having accepted the necessity of compromise, and enough time having elapsed for the consensus in the Kremlin to build on the idea, the newly elected Andropov offered in December 1982 to cut the number of deployed SS-20s in Europe (243) to 162, if no US INF deployments were made. The 162 was an explicit pairing of SS-20s to French and British theater ICBMs. The offer clearly "decoupled" the US deterrent in NATO leaders' eyes (if not in the eyes of opposition leaders), and Washington flatly rejected it. On March 30, after Kohl was safely reelected, Reagan retabled the "zero-zero" option, but also reinforced a push for a global ceiling on intermediate range missiles, balancing the NATO INFs with the Soviet totals in Europe and Asia, where 100 SS-20s provided a deterrent to the PRC threat. Moscow rejected the offer for various reasons, not the least of which was the inclusion of Pershing IIs in any numbers in Europe.

The Soviet shoot down of KAL Flight 007 over the Sakhalin Island in September 1983 hardened the Reagan administration's resolve to deploy INF and to modernize its own strategic forces. Opposition to the MX missile, however, was growing in Congress. On the very eve of a key budget vote on MX, which promised to be uncomfortably close, Reagan acceded to the "double build-down" scheme of the military reform caucus. This somewhat complicated proposal, in Soviet eyes, clearly worked against the throw-weight

advantages of their heavy missiles, and was accordingly unacceptable.

On November 23, 1983, with Britain, Italy, and West Germany then having reaffirmed their commitment to accept U.S. INF systems the following month, the Soviets walked out of the INF talks. Shortly thereafter, they left the START and MBFR talks. The bartering process of SALT had reached a dead end. Even though the MBFR talks would reopen in March 1984, and the Soviets would tantalize Western hopes with concessions for limited onsite inspections in chemical warfare talks, the deadlock over strategic and theater weapons, now seemingly fully entwined, was total. Technology and alliance politics would require a new path be opened.

Military Doctrines: How Little is Enough?

If arms reductions are to produce a strategic equilibrium, and, perhaps more importantly, win support from military leaders responsible for maintaining security, they must find a comfortable level where both sides feel deterrence and war fighting needs are still satisfied. Going below that least common denominator would require a change of ideologies and national interests not currently imaginable, although progress to such a level might reduce fears and build confidence to open a
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few doors now firmly shut.

To find a hypothetical floor to INF and central arsenal levels, we turn now to respective military doctrines and their needs.

Soviet and American strategic doctrines are both defensive,

and both believe escalation to full global thermonuclear war likely once started, but they view escalation differently.

From the time the Soviets acquired nuclear weapons and intercontinental delivery systems, American doctrine dropped automatic "massive retaliation" and searched for "firebreaks" in the escalation process, while still viewing the total arsenal as a deterrent. Since 1962 this doctrine has increasingly structured nuclear weapons into hard-target counterforce weapons, capable of surgically responding at any level of attack with a comparable retaliatory strike. With Presidential Directive 59 in 1979, this "tit-for-tat" policy has hardened into a "countervailing force" doctrine, promising a somewhat greater response to whatever attack is received, maintaining "escalation dominance," and overtly declaring an intent to target Soviet leadership and command headquarters. The countervailing force doctrine was an extension of former Defense Secretary Schlesinger's attempt to ensure the US president cannot be blackmailed by a limited Soviet attack into a surrender-or-full-war paradox. Its counterforce emphasis has inexorably led towards a force structure with inherent first-strike characteristics. The warhead requirements for this countervailing strategy depend on (1) the number and degree of hardening of Soviet strategic silos and bases, (2) the number of mobile launchers with ICBMS, (3) the dispersal of high value political and economic targets, and (4) the expected losses due to Soviet attacks on our own forces³¹ before a retaliatory strike can be launched. The latter increases as the accuracy and number of Soviet warheads increase. For a purely countervalue doctrine, one can target the 200 Soviet

cities that compromise over 50 percent of its population and the bulk of its industry.

In short, the American warhead requirements are directly related to the number and targetability of Soviet delivery systems. To the extent that reductions are verifiable, that the risk of deception and "breakout" approaches zero, and that early warning is assured to prevent advantages from preemption, doctrinal needs could theoretically approach the countervalue deterrent minimum. Going to such a purely countervalue minimum posture would necessarily mean a much greater attention to the conventional balance, since "extended deterrence" would then be telescoped down to a ladder with only two rungs.

Soviet doctrine is much more sanguine. Limited strategic options--the firing of a handful of missiles accompanied by an ultimatum--is ridiculed by the Soviets, although, interestingly enough, their force development structure supports the capability. The scientific determinism of warfare--and the Soviets are very arithmetic in computing correlation of forces as
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decision matrices --decrees that the side which first cripples the war-making abilities of its opponent will win. The earlier the application of decisive forces, the greater one's own survivability. Ideally, preemptive surprise would minimize one's losses. Such a doctrine puts no value on escalation control, and is more prone to first-use the more it feels it is on the strategic defensive. Since his UN speech in June 1982, Brezhnev has asserted the Soviets do not have a first-use doctrine, which many Western analysts feel is more an effort to raise the nuclear

threshold (the Soviets hold the strategic advantage in Europe at the conventional level) than a true reflection of what they would do in a real East-West war where all the chips are on the table. In a doctrine where escalation always goes to the limit, emphasis on bomb shelters, hardening industrial plants, and related survivability measures is predictable, and that is what one sees in the Soviet Union. Survivability measures increase the US warhead requirements, however, to maintain countervalue deterrence.

From a Soviet doctrinal standpoint, strategic systems could be reduced to purely a countervalue level, if not a zero-zero balance, as long as they retained confidence in conventional capabilities. This would again assume the same guarantees of verification, strategic warning, etc. These guarantees are unlikely without on-site inspections, however. Notwithstanding, Soviet ideology has accepted since Khrushchev's time that the Marxist-Leninist revolution can proceed without global warfare, and that the survivability of the Soviet Union, at risk in the present circumstances, is the preeminent condition for success of that process.

Although there is an historical pattern of underestimating the speed of Soviet acquisitions of U.S. technologies, the large number of decisive American counterforce weapons being deployed, or near deployment (Trident D-5, Stealth, cruise missiles, ASW systems, MX, the B-1 bomber, MARV technologies, etc., not to mention a major emerging effort on space ABM, the clincher of first-strike status if deployable) will soon put extreme pressure on Soviet defense planners, who have no other means of

neutralizing an emerging U.S. first-strike capability than to negotiate the U.S. out of these advantages, as they did with ABM in SALT I.

What then is a feasible minimum for strategic systems on both sides, and what conditions must be met to give it stability?

The ideal, although perhaps hardest to negotiate, force structure for both sides would be a purely countervalue nuclear force with just enough warheads to take out an unacceptably large number of the enemy's cities, and therefore serve as a minimum but credible deterrent. Such a countervalue force should be mobile, as difficult to locate and target as possible, and as far from population areas as possible. Its MIRV capabilities must be verifiable, and for reasons of negotiability, verification should involve the least intrusive onsite inspection requirements possible. Delivery systems with unverifiable capabilities must be ruled out.

The above description rules out ICBMs, MX, space weapons, cruise missiles, INF systems, and dual-purpose intercontinental bombers. The elimination of these systems can be verified, but either their capabilities cannot be verified, or they are too easily targeted, or their mobility on land threatens extended population areas with a retaliation threat and requires too intrusive onsite inspection. What remains are SSBNs.

With over half their populations clustered in 200 or less cities, the U.S. and U.S.S.R. could achieve a minimum countervalue force of 240 warheads with five SSBNs each on patrol at any one time (assuming 16 missiles with 3 warheads each), and

another five SSBNs each "laid up" in port for maintenance, with their warheads removed by inspecting parties to ensure MIRV limits are maintained until the submarines rotate out on patrol again. Intrusive inspection in this case need involve only one or two submarine bases. Elimination of other SSBNs and SSBN-killers (nuclear and diesel attack submarines, long-range ASW aircraft, etc.) could be verified with high certainty by national technical means. In the interest of NATO sensibilities, the British and French could operate two of the five SSBNs under their own national authorities, guaranteeing a "coupling" of the countervalue deterrent to Europe's defense.

It is arguable whether a purely countervalue, bare-bones structure is more stable than the current situation, where the sheer number of strategic warheads makes preemption calculations so high risk as to remain maximally deterrent. On the other hand, the mutual interest in reducing the cost of inadvertent war from an exchange of 9,000 strategic warheads on each side (forgetting INF and tactical nukes) to one of several hundred must have a high appeal to rational souls. Both sides would have a compelling interest in opening up any suspect facilities to ensure breakout was not possible. It would not be in either side's interest to refuse such a request, in such a world.

The destabilizing character of a counterforce arms race would be stopped before either side achieved a credible first-strike capability, a situation that could tempt preemption out of fear by the side seeing itself becoming so vulnerable. The unverifiable nature of new technologies, like the genie, could be pushed back in the bottle. Even the current hope of counterforce

strategists, mobile launchers like MX, in the end drives the other side to further multiplying warheads to cover even more terrain. Counterforce logic in the end leads inexorably to the equivalent of carpet-bombing, as mobile missiles are chased across the countryside.

A counterforce strategist might well ask at this point if we aren't back to the pre-Schlesingerian problem, where a limited Soviet attack on several key military targets leaves the President an unacceptable "all or nothing" option. Clearly we are not. The President can retaliate on one or more Soviet cities, keeping the exchange as limited as the Soviets want to go. From an American standpoint, having the Soviets pursue their counterforce doctrines by using up their SLBMs on military vice urban targets is quite acceptable, if the exchange has to be played out. A Soviet escalation to a massive countervalue response to the initial limited American response would lead to a full countervalue U.S. retaliation, immolating over 200 Soviet cities.

Those who argued in the 1970s that the Soviets "valued most" their military strength and leadership, which obviously could be dispersed from urban areas before the Soviets started the war, are not very convincing if they try to get us to believe that the Soviets would be willing to give up 40-150 million people and the hard-won comforts of urban life to start a war for questionable gains. They may have been willing to lose 20-25 million Russians to avoid German subjugation in World War II, but that was not a situation they went into willingly. America herself has suffered

severe casualties in world wars, but that does not mean she is willing to suffer those losses again in an adventuristic war. Even if the Soviets evacuated their cities prior to commencing hostilities, tens of millions of people would be flooding country villages where electricity is rare and where water is commonly hand-carried. Given radioactive fallout, the rigors of the Russian winter, and total disruption of supplies, the losses would still be horrendous, and that is still assuming that Soviet elites would be willing to give up the comforts of city life, which are a universe apart from stark life in the Soviet countryside. Even if they did evacuate cities, bomb shelters would save perhaps a modest fraction of their populations, but these survivors would confront a precarious existence when they surfaced. It is hard to imagine deterrence would not hold in a countervalue-structured parity.

What about breakout? Couldn't the Soviets secretly assemble ICBMs in warehouses, etc.? Let us assume the unlikely proposition that a significant force of ICBMs could be so assembled, without detection. The President is confronted one day with a Soviet arsenal of, say, three thousand warheads against his own 240. His own warheads are still at sea and unlikely to be targeted, much less destroyed, in any appreciable timeframe. He can still respond over a full spectrum to any Soviet attack. While the Soviets could impose "greater damage," they would still suffer losses up to 240 Soviet cities, an unacceptable price. As they destroyed in excess of 240 U.S. cities, plus various military facilities, the incremental gains would probably be weighed out by concerns over what would then be

happening to global ecology.

There are other problems, such as third country nuclear powers, other-nation ASW forces, etc., but these exist today anyway, and are probably more likely to be resolved now, when there is global consensus to get the superpowers to cut back on their 50,000 warhead arsenals.

INF Doctrines: Untangling Nuclear and Conventional Deterrence

The reader of the above proposal may be concerned at this point about Soviet conventional superiority as nuclear stockpiles approach a minimum. This is not really a concession. They already have conventional land warfare superiority in Europe. It has been politically impossible to get NATO members to redress the imbalance. The minimal countervalue SLBM force would still exist as a deterrent to a conventional land grab at Western Europe, with as much real credibility as the huge central systems we have today possess. Although we could no longer destroy their conventional forces with counterforce nuclear systems, deterrence is still well entrenched by holding their cities hostage.

While it is hard for most Westerners to conceive of a nuclear war limited to Europe, Soviet doctrines expressed since the mid-1960s consider tactical and theater nuclear forces as having "the main role in solving fundamental problems in a future war. . . ."³⁴

Under modern conditions, the situation has radically changed. For rockets with nuclear charges, a front line saturated with troops is no longer an obstacle, and distance plays no role. The presence of nuclear charges of unprecedented destructive and striking power, and rockets as the means of delivering these charges to the targets, makes it possible almost instantly, in a matter of minutes and hours, to

destroy any objective in enemy territory. A simultaneous nuclear rocket strike against the vital centers and means of armed combat of an enemy country is the quickest and most reliable way of achieving victory in modern war . . . This principle has now become indisputable.³⁵

In 1970, Colonel A. A. Sidorenko published The Offensive, which laid out an explicit doctrine based on the principle that theater nuclear weapons "will become the basic means of destruction on the field of battle."³⁶ When employed with surprise, massed nuclear weapons can neutralize the enemy's firepower and open holes in his defenses for Soviet mechanized and armor forces to strike decisively deep into the enemy's rear:

The actions of the troops on the battlefield are coordinated first of all with the nuclear strikes and are directed toward the exploitation of their results. Nuclear strikes, the destruction of enemy means of nuclear attack, and swift, highly maneuverable actions with the exploitation of gaps, breaches, and intervals in the enemy combat formation form the basis of the attack of the motorized rifle and tank podrazdeleniye in modern battle.³⁷

A war-winning strategy for limited nuclear warfare exists. The highly accurate SS-20s provide a capability to take out US nuclear stockpiles in Europe before they could be field-dispersed or used. Given the self-styled "defensive nature" of a preemptive Soviet strike, the Soviets may be loathe to give up theater and tactical nuclear weapons along with the central systems. U.S. INF systems, creating a greater threat of decapitation of Soviet homeland forces, should, however, be sufficiently powerful bargaining chips to get the Soviets to rethink the value of limited nuclear preemption as an integral part of their "defensive" theater war plans. Their current strategy is checkmated by mobile INF capabilities, as our own

have been by mobile SS-20s. Lieutenant Colonel John Hines, of the Defense Department's office for assessing Soviet forces, said in March 1984, that "the SS-20 is mobile, survivable, and extremely hard to find . . . We've seen them (the Soviets) building a force that would dissuade NATO from going nuclear."³⁸

Some Western analysts, notably Professors Chris Donnelly and Peter Vigor of Sandhurst, have argued in some detail that the Soviets already possess a credible "blitzkrieg" conventional capability to overwhelm NATO's forward-deployed forces with armored thrusts into rear areas.³⁹ J. M. McConnell of the Center for Naval Analyses has traced a distinct shift in Soviet military writings since 1980 towards a purely conventional strategy, including the first large exercise in decades not simulating a nuclear phase.⁴⁰ Two DOD analysts, P. A. Peterson and J. G. Hines, have recently argued that Soviet doctrine since the 1960s has continuously favored a purely conventional strategy, seeking to avoid war and conduct offensive conventional operations in such a way as to neutralize NATO's nuclear forces.⁴¹

This trend offers some optimism that the Soviets could be argued out of their INF and tactical nuclear weapons, leaving the theater arms competition in conventional areas, assuming a means of verification can be worked out on dual-purpose aircraft. We should not consider our present intra-NATO squabbles over conventional defense spending as necessarily preventing a capability to balance against, and deter, this threat. As Henry Kissinger points out, Western Europe alone has one and a half times the population and twice the GNP of the Soviet Union.⁴²

Negotiating Strategy: Actors, Interests, Options

There are many excellent analyses of the strategic arms
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talks negotiations. When one attempts to extract insights into the dynamics of these negotiations, two conclusions become immediately obvious: (1) what we know about the decision-making processes in the Soviet Union for arms proposals is based on ambiguous evidence; and (2) our own negotiating strategy has tended to vacillate radically as players, policies, and interests shifted. The flip-flops over MIRV controls in SALT I and cruise missiles in SALT II are particularly illustrative of this effort to negotiate without a long-term U.S. strategy and a firm inter-agency consensus.

The first problem, a poor understanding of Soviet decision-making processes in arms policies, has undermined our negotiating effectiveness. Carter's precipitate tabling of a deep-cuts proposal in March 1977 obviously gave the Soviets severe indigestion; consensus-building is a rather slow process on the other side, and rushing it is counter-productive.

We do know that all key national policies must win a blessing from a majority in the Politburo, and if the Politburo is split with the general secretary in the minority, the issue may be resolved by the Central Committee. As Hough and Fainsod observe in How the Soviet Union is Governed,

Probably the safest generalization about the distribution of power in the Soviet Union is that it must vary with the policy area. In the spheres of foreign and defense policy, one gains the impression of deep leadership involvement and of participation limited to specialists. Even the civilian foreign policy specialists seem to receive extremely little information about Soviet defense decisions except

that which they read in western sources.

Authoring a failed policy in the Politburo is politically fatal, and there seems to be a reluctance to be identified with high-risk policy issues, like agriculture and defense, where a member's expertise may be weak. Since the passing of Stalin and Khrushchev, none of the civilian members of the Politburo have had credible military leadership experiences to give real authority on defense issues. Defense Minister Ustinov alone possesses such knowledge. The busy Politburo members are not supported by personal staffs to cover military issues, nor is there any indication that Brezhnev's personal secretariat, the Central Committee departments, or its secretariat, have staff expertise in military affairs.⁴⁵ According to Igor Glagolev, former Chief of the Disarmament Section of the World Economy and International Relations, USSR Academy of Sciences, none of the civilian "think tanks" even have access to classified military figures, such as discussed in SALT. Glagolev and his peers, such as Arbatov at the USA and Canada Institute, use Western figures and produce for propaganda aimed at the West, rather than internal policymaking.⁴⁶ When asked in 1973 what inputs his research institute made to SALT planning, one department head replied, "We do not work on the development of a strategic arms limitation plan: that is Marshal Grechko's province."⁴⁷ There is no civilian layer in the Ministry of Defense, no RAND or Brookings Institute, nor any equivalent of Congressional staff experts on national security. Garthoff and Smith, members of the SALT I delegation, tell us that General Ogarkov even rebuked the US delegation for discussing classified military secrets in the

presence of the Soviet civilians in the Soviet delegation. Without such necessary information, it is obviously impossible to participate in SALT decision-making.

Raymond Garthof, Dmitri Simes, and Thomas Wolfe have all speculated that ad hoc working groups exist at the Politburo and Ministry levels (see Figure 3), much like the inter-agency SALT backstopping and verification committees have done in the US. While possible, it seems strange that no discussion of such groups or their members has surfaced in the past 15 years of strategic arms talks. ⁴⁹ What civilian-military interface does occur most likely is limited to the seldom-referenced Defense Council, where a handful of Politburo power brokers probably work out policies issues with the most senior military leaders. This body does not appear to have a separate secretariat or institutional working groups supporting it, such as the U.S. National Security Council does.

The evidence points heavily in the direction of nearly complete military jurisdiction over most aspects of SALT, a situation that mocks our own efforts to "mirror image" our own institutions on the Soviet system and, I believe, a major reason for our poor record in negotiating effectively. We have seriously overestimated the institutional influences of non-military interests to negotiate, and underestimated the amount of time major proposals must be weighed and integrated with defense doctrines and war plans. The "sluggishness" and distrust of change that characterize Soviet negotiating patterns is probably not unlike what our own might be if the Pentagon controlled our

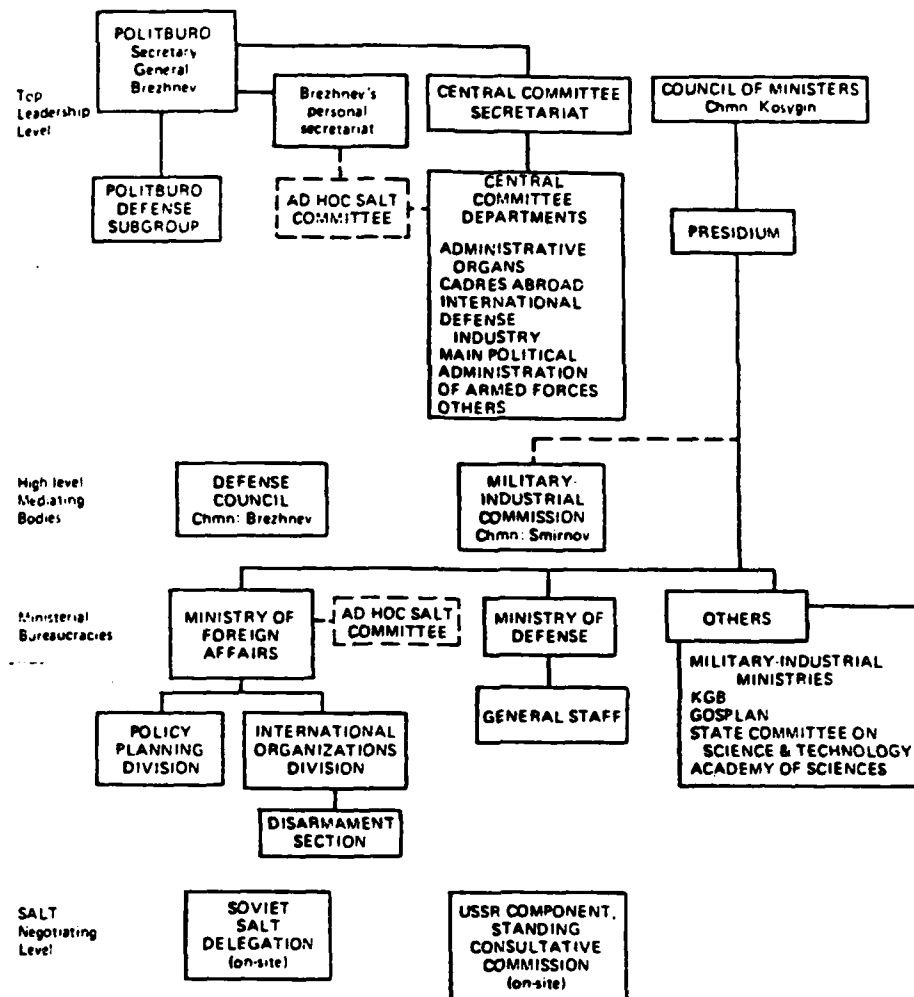


Fig. 3 Soviet Organizations Concerned with SALT

(Source: Thomas W. Wolfe, The SALT Experience (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing Co., 1979), p. 51.

negotiations. Kissinger and Vance both found progress in arms talks accelerated when they went "backchannel," short-circuiting the military from full participation.

Despite recurrent adjustments in our estimates of Soviet defense spending, it appears that spending levels stay at a fairly fixed percentage of GNP, almost as though the Politburo has computed what it can afford on defense and still maintain

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economic growth. The military seem to be left to themselves to maximize defense capabilities within this allotment. The senior military leaders these days, such as Marshals Ustinov, and Ogarkov, and Smirnov, are defense industry technocrats and strategists, unlike their predecessors, who tended to be field commanders. Only the Warsaw Pact commander-in-chief, Marshal Kulikov, of all the field commanders, is considered a potential Defense Council member, and his membership is uncertain. The technocrats' control over SALT decisions has been made repeatedly clear. Ogarkov clearly controlled the SALT I delegation with other military technocrats. U. Alexis Johnson, head of later SALT I negotiations, found agreements reached with Ambassador Semenov, head of the Soviet delegation, later reneged upon

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"because he was overruled by his generals" Smirnov, head of defense industrial planning, obtruded into the final Moscow summit talks to try to wring final concessions, even at the risk of embarrassing Brezhnev, who was at that point publicly committed to signing the SALT I treaty. While the Politburo still holds ultimate authority, it appears that it seldom asserts that authority against the military establishment. In the post-Brezhnev era, when the political leadership has been weak and

divided, military influence seems to have spread even further into foreign policymaking.

US Policymaking: Too Many Players, Too Many Interests

US policymaking on strategic arms issues is subject to hardball political infighting of a wide variety of players, whose influences wax and wane. A necessarily succinct summary of some of these interests follows:

1. Budgeteers. As previously discussed, from 1967 to 1982 Pentagon support for SALT centered on channelizing future growth of Soviet strategic forces.

2. Linkage. Implicit in continuing to make progress in the talks is the expectation that the other side will not misbehave in such a fashion as to undermine domestic support for improved relations. Incidents such as the U-2, the Czechoslovakian and Afghanistan invasions, KAL 007, etc., can upset domestic support to continue talks. Linkage tends to be more a concern of State Department and NSC staffers than the Pentagon, which tends to see arms talks, as the Kremlin does, as a long-term, separate issue, viewed from perspectives of relatively stable doctrines and force structures.

3. Alliance management. Talks must accommodate the interests of allies and not undermine the political credibility of military power. As the gap between global and theater weapons narrows, this aspect has become increasingly important, and complicating, for policymaking.

4. Leadership image. Arms talks are a public thermometer of bilateral relations. Failure to make continuing progress

tends to reflect on the competence of political leaders, especially near elections.

5. Summitry. The US insistence on linking arms agreements to East-West summit meetings warps the pace of negotiations and closes off peripheral progress in other aspects of bilateral relations. Towards the end, as Gerald Smith put it, a "lust for a summit" undoes previously agreed positions.⁵²

Conclusions.

Strategic and theater arms control talks have become the overridingly important element in US-Soviet relations. Without a positive momentum to keep the strategic balance stable, there is a chilling perception of declining security that further sours political, economic, and social relations.

Until 1979, it was possible to make progress in arms talks by putting quantitative caps on arms production, and a consensus could be held together to use these restraints to channelize defense spending more efficiently. Since the 1970s, qualitative improvements (e.g., MIRVing, STEALTHing, silo-busting accuracies) and new mobile weapons systems (cruise missiles, MX, SS-20, Pershing II, ASAT, space ABM, etc.) have increasingly destabilized the strategic balance, raising fears of first-strike capabilities that erode deterrence, and seriously questioning the verifiability of a new agreement. Increasing turbulence in the Third World, where both superpowers now project strategic forces, has raised public apprehensions that an eventual confrontation could turn nuclear, while doctrines on both sides still encourage countervailing escalation. The counterforce thrust of the arms race inherently flirts with first-strike capabilities, putting

pressures on the other side to preempt if they cannot catch up. With the move to cruise missiles and mobile ICBMs, there will be a corresponding pressure to increase numbers of warheads, now an unverifiable element in MIRVed missiles, until the equivalent of carpet-bombing is reached.

One means of breaking the impasse is to phase out counterforce weapons and return to a limited, verifiable countervalue force on each side, such as SSBNs. Whatever formula is worked out, it is clear we are beyond the bartering stage of negotiations. Any new agreement must be one that works reliably for both sides, that constructs a balanced system guaranteeing each other's security, that no longer is subject to a breakneck technology race. In the words of Hans Morgenthau,

The national interest of a nation that is conscious not only of its own interest but also that of other nations must be defined in terms compatible with the latter. In a multinational world this is a requirement of political morality; in an age of total war it is also a condition for survival.⁵³

Footnotes

¹For a recent exposition of practical problems in a world government, see Freeman Dyson, "Reflections: Weapons and Hope, IV - Concepts," New Yorker, Feb. 27, 1984, pp. 68-69.

²For one of the better theoretical discussions of the various approaches to arms control, including the problems of unilateral initiatives, see Hedley Bull, The Control of the Arms Race, 2nd ed. (New York: Praeger, 1965), pp. 3-94.

³Czar Nicholas and his war minister, General Kuropatkin, were probably more motivated by concern over Austria's modernization of her field artillery forces than by altruistic concerns (J. E. Dougherty, How to Think About Arms Control and Disarmament (New York: Crane Russak & Co., 1973), p. 38). I exclude the 1817 Rush-Bagot Treaty placing limits on naval forces in the Great Lakes from being the first major arms control treaty, in as much as it was a relatively local initiative not significantly affecting strategic balances.

⁴Carl von Clausewitz, On War, ed. and trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 78.

⁵Quoted in Joseph G. Whelan, Soviet Diplomacy and Negotiating Behavior: Emerging New Context for US Diplomacy (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service/Committee on Foreign Affairs, Jul. 11, 1979), p. 493.

⁶Cf., Raymond Garthoff, "Mutual Deterrence and Strategic Arms Limitation in Soviet Policy," International Security, Summer 1978, pp. 112-147; Henry Kissinger, Years of Upheaval (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1982), pp. 257-258.

⁷Since SALT I, both sides have continued to pursue ABM technologies within the treaty constraints. Both sides are now capable of deploying much more sophisticated systems if the ABM treaty is dropped, as some analysts feel is likely by 1985.

⁸American acknowledgements of this technological edge as a vital part of American security are legion in literature on the perils of uncontrolled technology transfer. Soviet references on the need to acquire similar advantages also exist, as in these quotations culled by Francis and Amoretta Hoeber: "No lags will be allowed in the military field: maintaining reliable military-technical superiority is a task conditioned by the international duties of the Soviet Union." (Maj. Gen. Ye. Nikitin and Col. S. Baranov, "The Revolution in Military Affairs and Measures of the CPSU for Raising the Combat Might of the Armed Forces," Voyennaya mysl, No. 6, 1968, FPD 005/69, p. 7.) And, "Using the achievement of Soviet economics, sciences, and technology, the party and state are doing everything necessary to bring about our constant qualitative and quantitative military and technical superiority over the armies of the leading capitalist states." (Marshall of the Soviet Union S. S. Biryuzov, "The Lessons of the Beginning Period of the Great Patriotic War," Voyennaya mysl, No. 8, 1964, FDP 904, p. 29.)

⁹Quoted in J. G. Whelan, op. cit., p. 434.

¹⁰COL John Farrar, USA, lecture at US Army War College, Apr. 6, 1984. Colonel Farrar is a leading expert in SALT verification issues and has studied the political-military interface in the

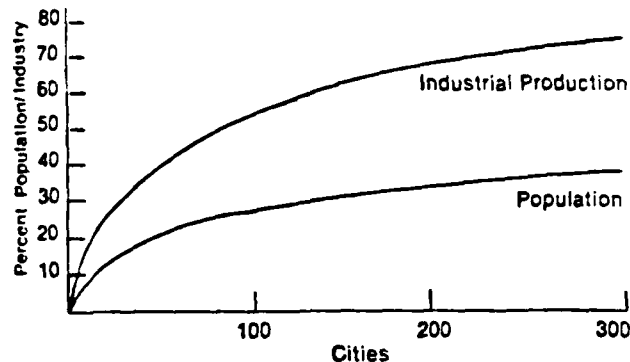
Soviet Union for 30 years. See also B. S. Lambeth, "The Political Potential of Soviet Equivalence," International Security, Fall 1979, p. 25.

¹¹ ABM estimates varied, but McNamara predicted final costs upward of \$40 billion in 1984 dollars).

¹² Theodore Sorensen, Kennedy (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 715.

¹³ Henry Kissinger, Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy (New York: Harper and Bros., 1957), passim. It is worth keeping in mind that about 50% of the Soviet Union's population is clustered in 200 cities:

Distribution of Soviet Population and Industrial Production (1975)



Source: Department of Defense Annual Report Fiscal Year 1981, by Harold Brown, Secretary of Defense (January 29, 1980) p. 79.

¹⁴ These ratios are compiled from figures in the Institute for Strategic Studies' The Military Balance 1969-1970, pp. 62-63.

¹⁵ The importance of accuracy relative to yield is clear in computing lethality. "Lethality is directly proportional to the two-thirds power of the warhead explosive yield (megaton equivalent) and inversely proportional to the accuracy (CEP) squared. The resulting equation for lethality (K) is: $K = Y^{2/3} / (CEP)^2$. Where: Y = warhead yield in megatons; CEP = accuracy in nautical miles."

¹⁶ The best interpretative history of the SALT II negotiations is Strobe Talbott's ENDGAME: The Inside Story of SALT II (New York: Harper and Row, 1979).

¹⁷ The best contemporary record of SALT II ratification issues is the 3-volume The SALT II Treaty: Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, US Senate (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1979).

¹⁸ Literature on the deficiencies of the SALT II verification procedures is extensive. The best summary of the increasing technical problems is probably Dr. Robert Kennedy's monograph "START: Problems and Prospects" (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, 1983).

¹⁹ The best summary of the Carter administration's defense of its positions on SALT II verification issues can be found in the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Challenges for US National Security: The Soviet Approach to Arms Control: Verification, Problems and Prospects (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1983).

²⁰ D. Shribman, "Senate Panel, Delaying Its Vote, Puts Arms Post Nominee in Doubt," New York Times, Feb. 17, 1984, p. A6.

²¹ Strobe Talbott, "Behind Closed Doors," Time, Dec. 5, 1983,

p. 20.

²²Ibid., p. 29.

²³Strobe Talbott, "Buildup and Breakdown," Foreign Affairs, America and the World 1983 issue, p. 588.

²⁴Caspar Weinberger, Annual Report to the Congress, Fiscal Year 1985 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 31.

²⁵Talbott, "Buildup and Breakdown," p. 590.

²⁶Talbott states ("Buildup and Breakdown," p. 605) that an unpublished presidential directive called for at least a 50 percent reduction in Soviet throw-weight in the first phase of any agreement.

²⁷A good example of the very sophisticated propaganda tracts that appeared at this time is the Soviet Committee for European Security and Cooperation, Scientific Research Council on Peace and Disarmament, A Threat to Europe (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981).

²⁸Chancellor Schmidt's NATO address in 1977 appears in part a reaction to SS-20 deployments begun that year, and in part a general recognition that SS-20 or not, modernized INF missiles would recouple the central systems and overcome the limited war stance developing in US LSO/LNO strategy.

²⁹Interview with Professor Trond Gilberg, a specialist in European communist parties at Pennsylvania State University, Apr. 12, 1984.

³⁰Despite American insistences that the Pershing II's range will not reach Moscow from Western Europe, the Kremlin believes they can. The difference in range is not large and maximum missile ranges are hard to verify.

³¹One of the few analyses to address this issue was F. P. Hoeber's "How Little Is Enough?" International Security, Winter 1978/79, pp. 53-73. Hoeber presents relevant questions but does not offer figures.

³²For a rough computation of warhead needs based on a counterforce strategy, see E. C. Ravenal, "Counterforce and Alliance: The Ultimate Connection," International Security, Spring 1982, pp. 28-29.

³³The "scientific" computation of battlefield "correlation of forces" is the first strategic principle of the commander. For example, see V. D. Sokolovskiy, ed., Soviet Military Strategy, 3rd edition, trans. and ed. by Harriet F. Scott (New York: Crane, Russak & Co., 1980). Also, J. J. Dziak, Soviet Perceptions of Military Power: The Interaction of Theory and Practice (New York: Crane, Russak & Co., 1981).

³⁴Ibid., p. 246.

³⁵Ibid., p. 276.

³⁶A. A. Sidorenko, The Offensive (A Soviet View) (Moscow: 1970), translated and published by USAF in "Soviet Military Thought" series, p. 41.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 41-42.

³⁸W. Andrews, "NATO Deterrent Hurt by New Soviet Arms," Washington Post, Mar. 14, 1984, p. 2.

³⁹Russell Watson, et al., "Moscow's New Strategy," Time, Dec 5, 1983, pp. 58-62, succinctly describes this analysis. See also C. N. Donnelly, "The Soviet Operational Maneuvre Group: A New Challenge for NATO," International Defense Review, No. 9-82, pp.

1177-1186 and P. H. Vigor, Soviet Blitzkrieg Theory (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983).

⁴⁰J. M. McConnell, The Soviet Shift in Emphasis from Nuclear to Conventional (Alexandria, VA: Center for Naval Analyses, 1983), Vol. II, p. 23ff.

⁴¹P. A. Peterson and J. G. Hines, "The Conventional Offensive in Soviet Theater Strategy," Orbis, Fall 1983, pp. 695-739.

⁴²Henry Kissinger, "A Plan to Reshape NATO," Time, Mar. 5, 1984, p. 22.

⁴³In addition to previously cited Smith's Doubletalk: The Story of SALT I and Talbott's ENDGAME: The Inside Story of SALT II, John Newhouse's COLD DAWN: The Story of SALT (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973), Thomas W. Wolfe's The SALT Experience (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing Co., 1979), and Raymond Garthoff's various articles, especially "Negotiating with the Russians: Some Lessons from SALT," International Security, Spring 1977, pp. 3-24.

⁴⁴J. F. Hough and M. Fainsod, How the Soviet Union is Governed (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 550.

⁴⁵For one of several discussions on limited civilian oversight, see Dmitri Simes, Detente and Conflict: Soviet Foreign Policy 1972-1977, Washington Paper No. 44 (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies of Georgetown University, 1977), pp. 52-53.

⁴⁶Igor Glagolev, "The Soviet Decision-Making Process in Arms Control Negotiations," Orbis, Winter 1978, pp. 767-776. Glagolev insists civilians working on arms control in the Foreign Ministry do not have security clearances (p. 769).

⁴⁷Unpublished RAND paper by Lilita Dzirkals, "Soviet Views on the Strategic Arms Control Process," p. 10; quoted in Wolfe, The SALT Experience, p. 40.

⁴⁸Newhouse, Cold Dawn, p. 192. For other examples of civilian negotiators not being familiar with fundamental characteristics and dispositions of their own weapons systems, see pp. 55-56.

⁴⁹Thomas Wolfe has noted that as SALT geared up in 1967, the Soviet military press briefly noted a need for a peacetime "supreme military-political organ," but the theme was quickly dropped (Wolfe, "Soviet Interests in SALT," in W. R. Kintner and R. L. Pfaltzgraff, eds., SALT: Implications for Arms Control in the 1970s (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973). W. Odom and others have speculated that the Defense Council may perform the function, but it does not seem to have an independent staff to give it any true inter-agency character, in the sense the US verification committee possessed.

⁵⁰The body of literature of Soviet defense spending estimates is large and contradictory. A good recent review of the debate can be found in "Soviet Defense Trends," a staff study prepared by the Subcommittee on International Trade, Finance, and Security Economics of the Joint Economic Committee, US Congress, Sept. 1983.

⁵¹Gen. Edward Rowny, USA, "The Soviets are Still Russians," Survey, Spring 1980, p. 4.

⁵²Smith, Doubletalk, p. 468.

⁵³Quoted in Leslie Gelb, "Reagan, Power, and the World," New York Times Magazine, Nov. 13, 1983, p. 78.

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